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Marketing Media Innovator to Speak at Historic MSCC Graduation

Michael Steele, president and chief executive officer of Advantage Communications, Inc., of Little Rock, will present the keynote address at Mid-South Community College's historic graduation on Thursday, May 10.

MSCC commencement exercises, featuring the College's largest graduating class in the institution's history, will begin at 7 p.m. at the West Memphis High School Lehr Arena. The graduation ceremony is open to the public, and everyone is welcome and encouraged to attend.



"Michael Steele is a great advocate of higher education, hard work, and perseverance, so he is an ideal person to address our graduates on their special night," said Dr. Glen Fenter, MSCC President.

"Michael is also a powerful and passionate speaker, as he demonstrated when he participated in our Black History Month activities earlier this year. We consider it a great honor for him to join us for this momentous occasion."

Nearly 270 Mid-South Community College students, including several who will receive multiple degrees and/or certificates, will be recognized on Thursday. An additional 28 students will receive bachelor's degrees from MSCC University Center partners Arkansas State University, the University of Arkansas at Fort Smith, and the University of Central Arkansas during the local ceremony.

Steele, a native of North Little Rock, is known as a marketing and media innovator in both domestic and international markets. He boasts more than 25 years of promotional experience, including pioneering work in brand marketing with the Stroh Brewery Company and the Coca-Cola Company.

While an employee of Coca-Cola, he represented the soft drink company in Europe and Africa and worked with people like Nelson Mandela (the highlight of his professional life) and former heavyweight boxing champion Evander Holyfield.

A graduate of Western Michigan University (B.S.), where he played college basketball, and Bowling Green State University (M.B.A.), Steele founded Advantage Communications Inc. of Little Rock. ACI is considered one of the fastest-growing, multi-cultural, marketing, advertising and public relations agency in the Mid-South. He built the company on the premise of “Creating Economic Value” for his clients.

“People looked at me like I was crazy when I said I wanted to start an advertising agency in Little Rock,” Steele said. “But we have experienced 10 years of growth and have the most incredible organization.”

A one-time professional player in the National Basketball Association (Milwaukee Bucks 1974) and the Continental Basketball Association, Steele brings that competitive edge to his work.

“I have outworked everybody I have ever met,” he said. “I will not stop; I am relentless.”

Steele established an enviable track record for new-product innovations including Stroh’s Light, Diet Coke, Equa, and HomePower loan products. His work at the helm of Advantage Communications has been recognized by Alltel, the U.S. Small Business Administration, and Dollar and Sense Magazine.

ACI clients include Verizon Wireless, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, Arkansas Department of Health HIV/STD Hepatitis C Section, Central Arkansas Water, ARVEST Bank, the Minority Initiative of Stamp Out Smoking, Arkansas Adult Learning Resource Center, and the Arkansas Department of Workforce Services.

Steele’s most recent personal passion is increasing literacy levels. Understanding the growing U.S. challenges, including low literacy rates, high dropout numbers, and increasing pools of uneducated youth and adults, he has positioned his agency as the advocate for education. This has been evident in the firm’s work in partnership with University of Arkansas, the University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff, Arkansas Adult Learning Resource Center, and more.

Steele also shares his conviction and experience as a member of the Walton College of Business Board of Directors.